**ADVANCE QUESTIONS TO TURKEY (THIRD BATCH)**

**UNITED STATES OF AMERICA**

* The United States is concerned by reports of human rights abuses by Turkish forces and Turkey-supported groups in northeast Syria during “Operation Peace Spring.” What mechanisms has your government put in place to investigate such allegations and hold to account those responsible?
* The United States remains concerned by those provisions of Turkish law that unduly limit freedoms of expression, peaceful assembly, and association. In Istanbul, the authorities have blocked the peaceful protest of the Saturday Mothers group. In Ankara, the governor has implemented a ban on LGBTI assemblies, despite a court ruling in their favor. The government is investigating thousands of people for social media posts that appear to be protected by the right of freedom of expression—something guaranteed by the Turkish Constitution and Turkey’s international legal obligations. What will your government do to ensure that these rights and legitimate expressions of opinion are protected and guaranteed? How will you ensure authorities do not continue to abuse anti-terror laws and insult laws, which lead to the stifling and penalizing of free speech?
* Reliable reports of torture and mistreatment in prisons continue to emerge. Human rights groups have received more than 800 reports of mistreatment in prisons, including torture, in 2019. The Ministry of Justice reported it had received only 31 complaints for 2018. We seek to understand the reason for this significant gap. The publication of the report of the Council of Europe’s Committee for the Prevention of Torture’s 2019 visit would demonstrate your commitment to combatting torture and mistreatment. What are your plans to hold accountable those members of the security forces found culpable of torture or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment?
* We remain deeply concerned by the number of journalists in prison or facing charges and the closure of hundreds of media outlets. In recent years the Committee to Protect Journalists and Reporters Without Borders have reported that Turkey has one of the highest number of jailed journalists in the world. A free press is one of the hallmarks of a healthy democracy. What can be done to protect journalists from politically motivated prosecution and to guarantee press freedom?
* The United States remains deeply concerned by the suspension of democratically elected mayors from the Peoples’ Democratic Party (HDP) in Turkey’s southeast. We note that most of these mayors were suspended based on investigations rather than official charges or prosecution. The government has replaced many of these mayors with government trustees. What steps is your government taking to restore faith in the electoral process?
* The United States welcomes Turkey’s Judicial Reform Strategy which lays out important and necessary reforms to the judicial system. We remain concerned about the slow pace of judicial proceedings, and thus the slow pace of justice. During trials, hearings are often months apart and are further delayed when judges are rotated out or replaced. Is this an area your government intends to tackle? What steps can be taken to speed trial proceedings?
* The United States remains deeply concerned about the lack of religious freedom for *all.* What measures is the Government of Turkey taking to ensure that members of minority religious faiths – or non-believers – are able to practice freely and not be subject to discrimination in the workplace, in school, in having the right to be conscientious objectors, and not to be required to include their faith, or lack thereof, on their national identity cards?